

Jesus our Shewbread
Exodus 25:23-30 & John 6:51

The Tabernacle was a busy place. Every day hundreds, if not thousands of people brought sacrifices for the priests to offer as a substitute for themselves.

Last week I mentioned that John the Baptist's father, Zechariah, was one of those priests.

Luke 1:5-9 - In the days of Herod, king of Judea, there was a priest named Zechariah, of the division of Abijah. And he had a wife from the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. ⁶ And they were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the commandments and statutes of the Lord. ⁷ But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and both were advanced in years. ⁸ Now while he was serving as priest before God when his division was on duty, ⁹ according to the custom of the priesthood, he was chosen by lot to enter the temple of the Lord and burn incense.

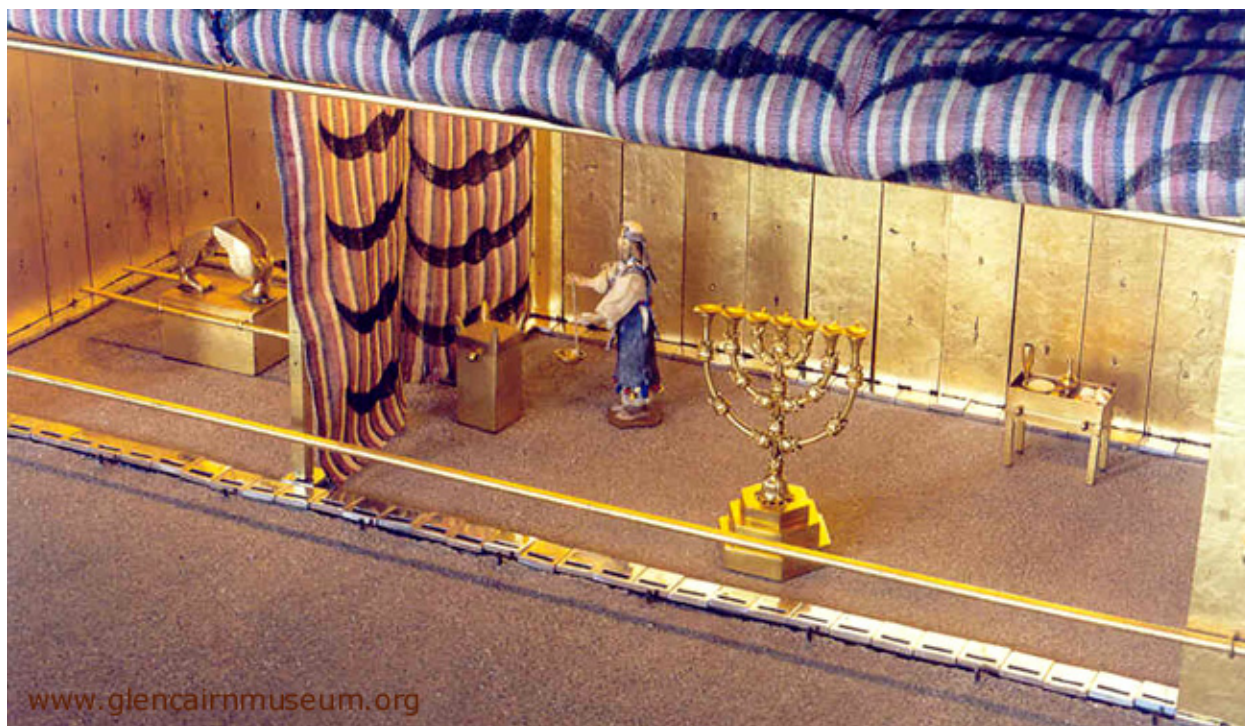
See note at the end of the sermon notes for Zechariah's "division of Abijah," ie., how he served as a priest.

We've been looking at how the Tabernacle points to Jesus:

- 1 – The courtyard gives people access to God just as Jesus is our 'way' (Jn 14:6) to God
- 2 – The altar is where sacrifices were offered. Jesus is our altar – Hb 13:9
- 3 – The laver is where the priest cleansed himself. Jesus cleanses us – 1 Jn 1:9
- 4 – The lampstand is how the priest saw to work. Jesus is our light – Jn 8:12
- 5 – The table of shewbread offered food for the working priest.

The Table of Shewbread was located on the right-hand side, the North side of the Holy Place. It is the only piece of furniture on the north side of the Tabernacle.

Insert into PP, this picture of the Holy Place from here – <https://blogs.bible.org/the-tabernacle-of-moses-gods-heavenly-pattern-for-our-spiritual-transformation-part-ii-the-holy-place/>



First: It's Description

- a) It was made of acacia wood. 23a

Acacia wood is the only type of wood used in the Tabernacle construction. It is the hardest of all hardwoods, characterized by high density and resilience. But is also very flexible and easy to work with Fungi, pests, weather will not will not affect furniture made of acacia. It grows in Africa, America, Asia and the Pacific coast. (I know nothing about wood and gleaned that from two websites.

- b) It was 3' long, 1½' wide and 2' high. 23b

- c) It was overlaid with gold. 24

Here's the point. Like the ark, the table of shewbread was made from Achaia wood and then overlaid with gold. This points to the humanity (incorruptible) and deity of Jesus.

- d) It had a rim around the edges to keep the bread from falling off. 25

Second: It's Accessories

- a) It was portable and had rings and poles for carrying. 26-28

b) It had plates and dishes of gold. 29

IMP: A table like this was present in all ancient Near Eastern homes. God was teaching Israel that the Tabernacle was His house, and he was welcoming them into his presence as guests. The word "guests" is an important word because the Tabernacle was temporary and God's presence in shekinah glory was temporary. But there is coming a day when God's home will be our home!

Revelation 21:3 - ...Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

c) It had shewbread on it all the time. 30

Third: It's Purpose

- a) The bread was -
- 1) made of fine flour,
 - 2) baked in 12 loaves,
 - 3) arranged in two piles of six loaves each on a table of pure gold,
 - 4) covered with frankincense, and
 - 5) served as a memorial food offering to the Lord.

b) 1 Chronicles 9:32 - Also some of their kinsmen of the Kohathites had charge of the showbread, to prepare it every Sabbath.

This bread was likely prepared on each Friday and placed in the tabernacle on each Sabbath in two piles of six. It would be replenished each week, allowing the priests to eat fresh bread in the holy place.

- c) The bread could only be eaten by Aaron and his sons in a holy place and was set out every Sabbath day

Leviticus 24:8-9 - Every Sabbath day Aaron shall arrange it before the LORD regularly; it is from the people of Israel as a covenant forever. ⁹ And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, since it is for him a most holy portion out of the LORD's food offerings, a perpetual due."

d) The shewbread was called "the bread of the Presence". 30

The literal Hebrew of "presence" is in plural "faces" meaning "face to face" with God.

When we look at the shewbread, we're looking at the face of God, but it's more than one face. It's an invisible face and a visible face -

John 1:1 - *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*

"With" = "pros" = towards = (toward a thing or looking toward a thing) face to face.

Exodus 33:20 - *But," he said, "you cannot see my face, for man shall not see me and live."*

So how do we see God?

John 1:14 - *And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father...*

John 14:9 – [Jesus to Phillip] - *Whoever has seen me has seen the Father.*

- e) Daily manna brought Israel 'face to face' God – the bread came down from heaven.

Read Exodus 16

When the Israelites saw it, they asked each other, "*What is it?*" (Heb. *man hu*). This led to the name "manna," "*what?*"

Psalm 78:23-25 - *...he commanded the skies above and opened the doors of heaven,²⁴ and he rained down on them manna to eat and gave them the grain of heaven.²⁵ Man ate of the bread of the angels; he sent them food in abundance.*

Deuteronomy 8:2-3 - *And you shall remember the whole way that the LORD your God has led you these forty years in the wilderness, that he might humble you, testing you to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commandments or not.³ And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.*

Deuteronomy 8:16 - *who fed you in the wilderness with manna that your fathers did not know, that he might humble you and test you, to do you good in the end.*

The people in Jesus' day misunderstood the significance of the manna. They longed for a physical miracle, like the manna, which would prove to them that Jesus' words were true (John 6:31). But Jesus wanted his disciples to seek for the bread of heaven that gives life to the world, instead of physical bread to satisfy their appetites. When they asked, "From now on give us this bread," he answered, "I am the bread of life" (vv. 32-35).

To the church in Pergamos, Jesus encouraged faithfulness by promising that true believers would receive "hidden manna" to eat (Rev 2:17).

Just as Moses' manna brought with it physical blessing, so Jesus, who is the bread of heaven, brings eternal life.

f) The Tabernacle brought Israel 'face to face' with God

"Manna" means "What is it?" but "shewbread/presence" however, means "bread of the face."

The question they asked in the wilderness is answered in the Table of Shewbread.

Exodus 19:4 - *You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself.*

Fourth: God's Provision in the Table of Shewbread

Leviticus 24:5-9 - *You shall take fine flour and bake twelve loaves from it; two tenths of an ephah shall be in each loaf. ⁶ And you shall set them in two piles, six in a pile, on the table of pure gold before the LORD. ⁷ And you shall put pure frankincense on each pile, that it may go with the bread as a memorial portion as a food offering to the LORD. ⁸ Every Sabbath day Aaron shall arrange it before the LORD regularly; it is from the people of Israel as a covenant forever. ⁹ And it shall be for Aaron and his sons, and they shall eat it in a holy place, since it is for him a most holy portion out of the LORD's food offerings, a perpetual due.*

The bread of the Presence was put on this table regularly (v. 30) — twelve loaves laid out in two piles of six loaves each (Lev. 24:5–9), probably to signify God's generous provision of food and other necessities for the twelve tribes of Israel.

IMP: This bread was like a food offering, which ancient pagans gave for their gods to eat. But Israel was not a pagan nation, so the one, true creator God, having no need to

eat to sustain Himself, gave it back to "Aaron and his sons" who ate it in His holy presence (v. 9)!!! God literally, 'turned the table!'

He is the God who needs nothing and the God who gives everything. This is why we sing -

*I approach the throne of glory
Nothing in my hands I bring
But the promise of acceptance
From a good and gracious King*

*You deserve the greater glory
Overcome, I lift my voice
To the King in need of nothing
Empty handed I rejoice*

Dining with someone in the ancient Near East was a sign of fellowship and peace, so the priests' eating of the bread of the Presence in God's house signified the Lord was at peace with His people.

Yet this was a limited peace because under the Old Covenant, only the priests, not every Israelite, enjoyed the privilege of dining with the Creator and Israel as a nation broke that peace with God by violating the covenant.

Under the new covenant, however, Christ has effected an eternal peace (Shalom) between the Father and His people, so we may dine in His presence, especially when we partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper at His table. This is how Jesus foresees it -

John 6:52-59 - The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, "How can this man give us his flesh to eat?"⁵³ So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you.⁵⁴ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.⁵⁵ For my flesh is true food, and my blood is true drink.⁵⁶ Whoever feeds on my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.⁵⁷ As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so whoever feeds on me, he also will live because of me.⁵⁸ This is the bread that came down from heaven, not like the bread the fathers ate, and died. Whoever feeds on this bread will live forever."⁵⁹ Jesus said these things in the synagogue, as he taught at Capernaum.

As well, Jesus taught us, like Israel, to remember our daily need and God's daily supply -

Matthew 6:11 - *Give us this day our daily bread.*

Fifth: Jesus is God's Table of Shewbread

John 6:35 - *Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me shall not hunger, and whoever believes in me shall never thirst."*

John 6:51 - *I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh."*

Matthew 26:26 - *Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body."*

Conclusion:

Jesus was right. Many things can fill us but only He can sustain us. You know this is true. Just as bread is a staple of life, so Jesus is *the* staple of life. Accepting him as Savior is like being fed by him with an eternal food, one that will not only fill you now but never perish as well.

Community Group

- 1 – What have you learned about the Tabernacle?
- 2 – What has most thrilled your heart?
- 3 – Review the courtyard, altar, laver, lampstand.
- 4 – Remind everyone that the furniture was laid out in the shape of a cross.
- 5 – Read Ex 25:23-30.
- 6 – Talk about acacia wood.
- 7 – What does the wood overlaid with gold signify?
- 8 – Why is the humanity and deity of Jesus important to his sacrifice/death?
- 9 – What was the shewbread for and who could eat it?
- 10 – How is the New Covenant better than the Old Covenant in this regard?
- 11 – Discuss how "the bread of presence" points to Jesus.
- 12 – Remind everyone that the table of shewbread is not an offering to Israel's God but something Israel's God has given them. Why is that different from paganism and why is it important?
- 13 – Read those texts in point five that point to Jesus as the table of shewbread.

Daily Devotion

Monday, Nov 20th. Read Ex 25:23-30 & Lev 24:8-9. Food offerings are normally provided for a god but, Israel's God created the table of shewbread for the priests to eat as they served him. In Christianity, God 'turns the tables.' Instead of us serving him, He serves us. This is because God is the only whole, self-sustaining entity in creation. He needs nothing but we need him. Take a moment to think about how you relate to God. Is it your work that saves you or his work that saves you? Do you live like that? Is it your efforts that please him or does he provide his Spirit and gifts to enable you to serve him? This makes serving Jesus a joy and not a burden. Does your service look like that? Use this day to reflect on these truths so that you can rest in Him, even while serving him. Then make sure you share this good news with someone else.

Tuesday, Nov 21st. Read Ex 25:23-30. The table of shewbread is made of acacia wood overlaid with gold, speaking to Jesus's humanity and deity. Jesus was simultaneously and equally wholly God and wholly man. As a man he perfectly fulfilled the law on our behalf and then died in our place. As God he paid the price of offending an infinite God and could not remain dead, bursting from the grave. Only the doctrine of the Trinity (which makes Christianity unique among monotheistic religions like Judaism and Islam) can truly save us. As the God-man, Jesus is both priest and sacrifice, lamb and lion, dead and forever alive. Take a moment to contemplate this, rejoice in it and then rest in what Jesus has done on your behalf. Marvel in grace. It will do your soul good!

Wednesday, Nov 22. Ex 25:30, 33:20, Jn 1:4, 14 & 14:9. Tomorrow is Thanksgiving. You will sit down at a table to see many faces. In the table of shewbread (presence) we see the face of Jesus who enables us to see our invisible God (Jn 4:24). In other words, Jesus is God, 'with skin on.' What do you learn about God from Jesus? Tomorrow when you sit at your Thanksgiving table with many faces, let everyone know that you are so glad that Jesus has shown us God's face and that seeing his face is the most important face. Then remind them that they will eat this Thanksgiving meal and be hungry again, perhaps for leftovers. But Jesus is our 'daily manna' and only he can satisfy us forever.

Thursday, Nov 23rd. *Happy Thanksgiving Day!* You have seen the Gospel/good news in the table of shewbread. Feast on what you've learned about Jesus and share it today!

Friday, Nov 24th. Read Jn 6:35, 51 & Mt 26:26. Did you get hungry again after your Thanksgiving meal? Did you eat later that day or evening, or perhaps this morning? Food is God's gift to us, but it never permanently satisfies us. C. S. Lewis once wrote, *"If we find ourselves with a desire that nothing in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that we were made for another world."* Apply that to something as simple

as food. It cannot satisfy you. But in your daily devotions, your prayers, your service, your fellowship, etc., Jesus will satisfy you. He will be your 'all-in-all,' which nothing else and no one else can do for you. Stop searching for someone or something to do for you what only God can do. It's exhausting. Receive Jesus, not only as your Savior but your sustenance, or, (to say it another way) as your Savior for everything; not just your eternal soul but your everyday happiness. Then, out of his abundance you can live full, so full that God's grace in you overflows into the lives of others. Feast on Jesus everyday!

Note:

The division of Abijah - Aaron had four sons. Two of them died without having children but the other two produced many descendants. After crowning Solomon as his heir, King David chose 24 male descendants of Aaron to lead 24 "divisions" - i.e., clans - of priests to perform priestly duties, including the animal sacrifices, at the tabernacle of the LORD, and then at the temple of Jerusalem to be built by Solomon. In first century AD, the 24 divisions lived throughout Israel but came to Jerusalem and served as priests during the three major feasts ([Passover](#), [Pentecost](#) and [Tabernacles](#)) when the city filled with pilgrims and the number of animal sacrifices soared. In between these feasts, the 24 divisions took turns, always in the same order, to return to Jerusalem once about every 6 months to serve as priests for one week, starting and ending on the Sabbath day (the departing division performed the morning sacrifices from 9 AM to noon, and the arriving division performed the afternoon sacrifices from noon to 3 PM). The division of Abijah was the "**eighth**" (1 Chronicles 24:10) of the 24 divisions, and the rotation began at the conclusion of the Feast of Passover. Since [Passover](#) falls in April or late March in our Gregorian calendar and [Pentecost](#) falls seven weeks thereafter, the two non-feast weeks of priestly duty for the division of Abijah were in June/July and 25 weeks later (24 week + [Feast of Tabernacles](#)) in December/January; this is important to timing the birth of Jesus (see [Shepherds in the Field](#)). Both Elizabeth and Zacharias were descendants of Aaron and members of Israel's priestly clan.